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Report

Soul poverty to “follow Jesus”

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Abstract: Word of the Lord of the holy mass of today, in which we talk about ascetism and purity of soul, spirit elevation towards God, towards infinite, as the Greatest Value, necessary condition to enter in the Kingdom of God _Parola di Dio di oggi, nella quale si parla di ascesi, di distacco dai beni materiali di purezza di spirito, ed elevazione dello spirito a Dio, all’infinito, come Sommo Bene e condizione necessaria all’ingresso nel regno di Dio.

Keywords: fidelity, loyalty, marriage, friendships, religions

Grado della Celebrazione: Feria
Colore liturgico: Verde DO081 ;

Quest'uomo ricco che accorre a Gesù desidera entrare nel regno dei cieli e viene a lui perché gli insegni la via: è il modo giusto di incominciare. Gesù gli risponde ricordandogli i comandamenti di Dio e allora ci rendiamo conto che costui non solo ha ascoltato Dio, ma ha messo in pratica le sue leggi ed è quindi già sulla strada del regno. E per questo che Gesù gli propone una tappa ulteriore: "Allora Gesù, fissatolo, lo amò e gli disse: "Una cosa sola ti manca: va', vendi quello che hai e dallo ai poveri e avrai un tesoro in cielo; poi vieni e seguimi"". E qui il cammino si arresta: "Egli, rattristatosi per quelle parole, se ne andò afflitto, poiché aveva molti beni". Gli sembra impossibile lasciare quello che ha per prendere ciò che il Signore gli offre; manca di fede e non sa più ascoltare la parola del Signore, non sa più vedere che essa è una parola di amore. "Gesù, fissatolo, lo amò dice Marco e gli disse: Una sola cosa ti manca...". Non è per impoverirlo che Gesù gli parla, non è per severità, ma per affetto, per amore e per renderlo veramente ricco. Gesù vuol aprirgli gli occhi e fargli vedere che la sua ricchezza è in verità una mancanza: "Una cosa sola ti manca: va', vendi quello che hai... libera te stesso dallo ai poveri...". Allora sarai ricco, perché quando avrai dato tutto avrai un tesoro in cielo. "Poi vieni e seguimi". La proposta di Gesù è quella di entrare già ora nel regno, di avere già ora un tesoro nel cielo e, più ancora, di entrare nella sua intimità:
"Vieni e seguimi". La ricchezza gli impedisce di seguire Gesù, è un peso che rallenta il suo passo, che lo ostacola.
È una lezione che dobbiamo sempre accogliere, perché molto sovente è la nostra "ricchezza" che ci impedisce di camminare, di avere in Gesù una fede totale, di capire che la sua è sempre una proposta d'amore; la nostra ricchezza che non è necessariamente fatta di beni materiali, ma di

tante cose di ogni genere. Si può essere attaccati a letture, a spettacoli, a passatempi... che impediscono di essere disponibili ad ascoltare la parola di Dio e a seguirla. Siamo sempre chiamati a semplificare la nostra vita e a renderci conto che la nostra vera ricchezza è solo nel seguire Gesù. Gesù riconosce che questo distacco è difficile: "Quanto difficilmente coloro che hanno ricchezze entreranno nel regno di Dio!" Ma vedendo l'inquietudine e l'angoscia dei discepoli egli stesso offre il mezzo, richiamandoli di nuovo alla fede. ~ rimedio non è nella nostra forza, nei nostri tentativi umani, ma nell'aprirsi all'azione di Dio: "Impossibile presso gli uomini, ma non presso Dio! Perché tutto è possibile presso Dio".

E rieccoci al punto di partenza. È sempre qui che bisogna tornare in ogni difficoltà, si tratti di un ostacolo da superare, di un peso da sopportare o di un peso di cui dobbiamo liberarci: l'uomo non può riuscirci, ma ci riesce Dio in lui, se egli ha fede. L'ultima parola del Vangelo odierno è anche l'ultima parola dell'Angelo a Maria: "Niente è impossibile a Dio". Siamo così davanti all'esempio di Maria, che ascolta la parola che viene da Dio, l'ascolta nella sua povertà, nella sua umiltà e aderisce a questa affermazione fondamentale: "Tutto è possibile a Dio".

L'essenziale è dunque ascoltare Dio, essere docile a Dio nella fede e camminare con fiducia sulla strada in cui Dio ci ha posto.

Celebration Grade: Feria

Liturgical Color: Green DO081 ;

This rich man who runs to Jesus wants to enter the kingdom of heaven and comes to him so that he can teach him the way: this is the right way to begin. Jesus responds by reminding him of God's commandments and then we realize that this man has not only listened to God, but has put his laws into practice and is therefore already on the road to the kingdom. And for this reason Jesus proposes a further stage: "Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, 'You lack one thing: go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.'" And here the journey stops: "He, saddened by these words, went away sorrowful, for he had many possessions". It seems impossible to him to leave what he has to take what the Lord offers him; he lacks faith and no longer knows how to listen to the word of the Lord, he no longer knows how to see that it is a word of love. "Jesus, looking at him, loved him, says Mark, and said to him: One thing you lack...". It is not to impoverish him that Jesus speaks to him, it is not out of severity, but out of affection, out of love and to make him truly rich. Jesus wants to open his eyes and make him see that his wealth is in truth a lack: "One thing you lack: go, sell what you have... free yourself give to the poor...". Then you will be rich, because when you have given everything you will have a treasure in heaven. "Then come and follow me". Jesus' proposal is to enter the kingdom now, to have a treasure in heaven now and, even more, to enter into his intimacy:

"Come and follow me". Wealth prevents him from following Jesus, it is a weight that slows his pace, that hinders him.

It is a lesson that we must always welcome, because very often it is our "wealth" that prevents us from walking, from having total faith in Jesus, from understanding that his is always a proposal of love; our wealth which is not necessarily made up of material goods, but of many things of all kinds. We can be attached to readings, to shows, to pastimes... which prevent us from being available to listen to the word of God and to follow it. We are always called to simplify our lives and to realize that our true wealth is only in following Jesus.

Jesus recognizes that this detachment is difficult: "How difficult it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" But seeing the restlessness and anguish of the disciples, he himself offers the means, calling them back to faith. ~ the remedy is not in our strength, in our human attempts, but in opening ourselves to the action of God: "Impossible with men, but not with God! Because everything is possible with God".

And here we are back to the starting point. It is always here that we must return in every difficulty, whether it is an obstacle to overcome, a burden to bear or a burden from which we must free ourselves: man cannot succeed, but God succeeds in him, if he has faith. The last word of today's

Gospel is also the last word of the Angel to Mary: "Nothing is impossible for God". We are thus before the example of Mary, who listens to the word that comes from God, listens to it in her poverty, in her humility and adheres to this fundamental affirmation: "Everything is possible for God". The essential thing is therefore to listen to God, to be docile to God in faith and to walk with confidence on the path on which God has placed us.

Prima lettura

Sir 17,20-28

Volgiti all'Altissimo e allontanati dall'ingiustizia.

Dal libro del Siràcide

A chi si pente Dio offre il ritorno,
conforta quelli che hanno perduto la speranza
e li rende partecipi della sorte dei giusti.
Ritorna al Signore e abbandona il peccato,
prega davanti a lui e riduci gli ostacoli.
Volgiti all'Altissimo e allontànati dall'ingiustizia;
devi odiare fortemente ciò che lui detesta.
E riconosci i giusti giudizi di Dio
e persisti nella sorte che ti è assegnata
e nella preghiera al Dio altissimo.
Negl'inferi infatti chi loderà l'Altissimo,
al posto dei viventi e di quanti gli rendono lode?
Non perseverare nell'errore degli uomini iniqui;
prima di morire manifesta la tua lode.
Da un morto, che non è più, non ci può essere lode,
chi è vivo e sano loda il Signore.
E loderai Dio e ti glorierai della sua misericordia.
Quanto è grande la misericordia del Signore,
il suo perdono per quanti si convertono a lui!
Parola di Dio

First Reading
Sir 17:20-28
Turn to the Most High and turn away from injustice.
From the book of Sirach

To those who repent, God offers a return,
he comforts those who have lost hope
and makes them sharers in the lot of the righteous.
Return to the Lord and abandon sin,
pray before him and reduce the obstacles.
Turn to the Most High and turn away from injustice;
you must hate strongly what he hates.
And recognize the righteous judgments of God
and persist in the lot assigned to you
and in prayer to the Most High God.

For in the netherworld who will praise the Most High,
in place of the living and of those who praise him?
Do not persist in the error of wicked men;
before you die, show your praise.
From a dead man, who is no more, there can be no praise,
who is alive and healthy praises the Lord.
And you will praise God and boast of his mercy.
How great is the mercy of the Lord,
his forgiveness for those who convert to him!

Word of God

Mc 10,17-27

Vendi quello che hai e vieni! Seguimi!

Dal Vangelo secondo Marco

In quel tempo, mentre Gesù andava per la strada, un tale gli corse incontro e, gettandosi in ginocchio davanti a lui, gli domandò: «Maestro buono, che cosa devo fare per avere in eredità la vita eterna?». Gesù gli disse: «Perché mi chiami buono? Nessuno è buono, se non Dio solo. Tu conosci i comandamenti: "Non uccidere, non commettere adulterio, non rubare, non testimoniare il falso, non frodare, onora tuo padre e tua madre"».
Egli allora gli disse: «Maestro, tutte queste cose le ho osservate fin dalla mia giovinezza». Allora Gesù fissò lo sguardo su di lui, lo amò e gli disse: «Una cosa sola ti manca: va', vendi quello che hai e dallo ai poveri, e avrai un tesoro in cielo; e vieni! Seguimi!». Ma a queste parole egli si fece scuro in volto e se ne andò rattristato; possedeva infatti molti beni.
Gesù, volgendo lo sguardo attorno, disse ai suoi discepoli: «Quanto è difficile, per quelli che possiedono ricchezze, entrare nel regno di Dio!». I discepoli erano sconcertati dalle sue parole; ma Gesù riprese e disse loro: «Figli, quanto è difficile entrare nel regno di Dio! È più facile che un cammello passi per la cruna di un ago, che un ricco entri nel regno di Dio». Essi, ancora più stupiti, dicevano tra loro: «E chi può essere salvato?». Ma Gesù, guardandoli in faccia, disse: «Impossibile agli uomini, ma non a Dio! Perché tutto è possibile a Dio».

Parola del Signore

Mk 10,17-27

Sell what you have and come! Follow me!

From the Gospel according to Mark

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'"

He said to him, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth." Then Jesus looked at him and loved him and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell what you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me!" But when he heard this, his face fell and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered them again and said, "Children, how hard it will be to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." They were even

more astonished and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said, “For men it is impossible, but not for God; for all things are possible for God.”

The Word of the Lord

Preghiera dei fedeli

La Parola che abbiamo ascoltato è per noi fonte di viva speranza. Non c'è nodo che Dio non possa sciogliere, perché in lui è bontà e potenza. Perciò chiediamo con fede:

Dio misericodioso, ascoltaci!

Ti preghiamo per la Chiesa: completa ciò che in lei è santo e buono e purificala da ciò che ancora le impedisce di vivere in semplicità:

Ti preghiamo per chi ha scelto la vita religiosa: i voti con cui si è legato più strettamente a te, siano segno di libertà profonda:

Ti preghiamo per chi si crede potente e giusto su questa terra: penetra il suo cuore con il profumo dell'umiltà:

Ti preghiamo per i poveri che chiedono giusta partecipazione ai beni della terra: fà che siano ascoltati nelle loro richieste e pronti a riconoscere la tua provvidenza:

Ti preghiamo per chi si è allontanato da te e si sente dimenticato: elargisci un segno della tua bontà perché si converta e viva:

Per la Caritas diocesana e parrocchiale.

Per chi confida solamente nella ricchezza.

O Padre, a te nulla è impossibile: manda lo Spirito nel nostro cuore per renderci disponibili alla tua parola di vita e solidali con tutti gli uomini. E' Gesù che ci ha insegnato a pregarti così. A lui onore e gloria nei secoli dei secoli. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

The Word we have heard is for us a source of living hope. There is no knot that God cannot untie, because in him is goodness and power. Therefore we ask with faith:

Merciful God, hear us!

We pray for the Church: complete what is holy and good in her and purify her from what still prevents her from living in simplicity:

We pray for those who have chosen the religious life: may the vows with which they have bound themselves most closely to you be a sign of profound freedom:

We pray for those who believe themselves powerful and just on this earth: penetrate their hearts with the perfume of humility:

We pray for the poor who ask for a just share in the goods of the earth: may they be heard in their requests and ready to recognize your providence:

We pray for those who have distanced themselves from you and feel forgotten: grant a sign of your goodness so that they may convert and live:

For diocesan and parish Caritas.

For those who trust only in wealth.

O Father, nothing is impossible to you: send the Spirit into our hearts to make us available to your word of life and in solidarity with all men. It is Jesus who taught us to pray to you in this way. To him be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Omelia (03-03-2025)

Missionari della Via

Il Vangelo di quest'oggi ci mette in crisi; certo, se ci lasciamo interpellare... Noi, magari, siamo di quelli che frequentano la chiesa, ci accostiamo ai sacramenti, cerchiamo di fare del bene, osserviamo i comandamenti, ma se ci guardiamo interiormente cosa ci manca? (Naturalmente se pensiamo che ci manchi qualcosa!). I comandamenti che Gesù cita, e che questo ricco dice di osservare, sono quelli che riguardano il rapporto con il prossimo ma non il rapporto con Dio. Questo tale di certo non è una persona cattiva, come magari pensiamo di noi stessi, ma Dio quale posto occupa veramente nella sua vita e nella mia vita? In fondo è questa la domanda che il tale di questo Vangelo si sente dire e che oggi rivolge a me. Davvero Gesù viene prima di tutti i miei beni, delle mie ambizioni, di tutti i miei affetti, delle persone a me più care? Il tale di questo Vangelo alla proposta di Gesù di vendere tutto e di seguirlo «si fece scuro in volto e se ne andò rattristato; possedeva infatti molti beni». In fondo anche oggi, anzi, forse ancor di più, c'è tanta gente dal volto rabbuiato e triste perché le vicende della vita non vanno secondo i loro desideri. C'è gente che non è mai contenta di quello che ha e pensa e desidera quello che non ha. E noi, di che cosa ci lamentiamo? Quali sono le cose che non riusciamo ad accettare nella fede? Siamo spesso tristi? Con tanta umiltà chiediamoci quale posto occupa Dio nella nostra vita, e come risponderemmo se ci chiedesse di lasciare quella cosa che riteniamo la più importante nella (e per la) nostra vita.

«C'è una tristezza, che è una malattia dell'anima. Nasce nel cuore dell'uomo quando svanisce un desiderio o una speranza. Nel cuore dell'uomo nascono speranze che vengono a volte deluse. Tutti attraversiamo prove che generano in noi tristezza, perché la vita ci fa concepire sogni che poi vanno in frantumi. In questa situazione, qualcuno, dopo un tempo di turbamento, si affida alla speranza; ma altri si crogiolano nella malinconia, permettendo che essa incancrenisca il cuore... C'è qualcosa nel passato di tutti che dev'essere guarito. I padri del deserto descrivevano la tristezza come un verme del cuore, che erode e svuota chi l'ha ospitato... dobbiamo stare attenti a questa tristezza e pensare che Gesù ci porta la gioia della risurrezione. Per quanto la vita possa essere piena di contraddizioni, di desideri sconfitti, di sogni irrealizzati, di amicizie perdute, grazie alla risurrezione di Gesù possiamo credere che tutto sarà salvato. Gesù non è risorto solo per se stesso, ma anche per noi, per riscattare tutte le felicità che nella nostra vita sono rimaste incompiute. La fede scaccia la paura, e la risurrezione di Cristo rimuove la tristezza come la pietra dal sepolcro. Ogni giorno del cristiano è un esercizio di risurrezione... Uno scrittore francese, León Bloy, ci ha lasciato questa stupenda frase: "Non c'è che una tristezza, [...] quella di non essere santi". Che lo Spirito di Gesù risorto ci aiuti a vincere la tristezza con la santità» (papa Francesco).

Homily (03-03-2025)

Missionaries of the Way

Today's Gospel puts us in crisis; certainly, if we let ourselves be questioned... We, perhaps, are those who attend church, we approach the sacraments, we try to do good, we observe the commandments, but if we look inside ourselves, what are we missing?

(Of course if we think we are missing something!). The commandments that Jesus cites, and that this rich man says he observes, are those that concern the relationship with others but not the relationship with God. This guy is certainly not a bad person, as we may think of ourselves, but what place does God really occupy in his life and in my life? Ultimately, this is the question that the guy in this Gospel hears and that he asks me today. Does Jesus really come before all my possessions, my ambitions, all my affections, the people dearest to me? The man in this Gospel, when Jesus proposed to sell everything and follow him, "had a dark face and went away sad, for he had many possessions." After all, even today, or rather, perhaps even more so, there are many people with darkened and sad faces because the events of life do not go according to their wishes. There are people who are never happy with what they have and think and desire what they do not have. And we, what do we complain about? What are the things that we cannot accept in faith? Are we often sad? With great humility, let us ask ourselves what place God occupies in our lives, and how we would respond if he asked us to leave behind that thing that we consider the most important in (and for) our life.

"There is a sadness, which is a disease of the soul. It arises in the heart of man when a desire or a hope vanishes. In the heart of man, hopes are born that are sometimes disappointed. We all go through trials that generate sadness in us, because life makes us conceive dreams that then fall apart. In this situation, some, after a time of turmoil, rely on hope; but others wallow in melancholy, allowing it to fester in the heart... There is something in everyone's past that needs to be healed. The desert fathers described sadness as a worm in the heart, which erodes and empties those who hosted it... we must be careful of this sadness and think that Jesus brings us the joy of resurrection. However full life may be of contradictions, of defeated desires, of unfulfilled dreams, of lost friendships, thanks to the resurrection of Jesus we can believe that everything will be saved. Jesus did not rise only for himself, but also for us, to redeem all the happiness that remained unfulfilled in our life. Faith drives out fear, and the resurrection of Christ removes sadness like the stone from the tomb. Every day of the Christian is an exercise in resurrection... A French writer, León Bloy, left us this wonderful phrase: "There is only one sadness, [...] that of not being saints". May the Spirit of the risen Jesus help us to overcome sadness with holiness" (Pope Francis).

Commentary of BFS@CNR

This is one of the most painful riddle of the new testament in my opinion. In Lukas Batitudinis, it is said “beati i poveri/ beati-blessed the poors”…most probably the predication vas towards poors with little education. In Mattew the public was different most probably better educated and less poor, and in the predication it was said “beati I poveri in spirit-beati-blessed the poors in spirit”, that in my opinion is more correct. This is in contrast with here in Mark where Jesus said to the guy to sell all and to follow him…he was rich and he did not follow him. It was a pity.How can we understand nowdays such a Word of Jesus? In my opinion we can find an answer in the Buddhist practice of detachment, I look for it. Here you are the results from Wikipedia.

Asceticism

"Ascetic" redirects here. For the emphasis of art and beauty, see Aestheticismand Aesthetics.

Pursuing enlightenment, the historical Buddha first practiced severe asceticism before recommending a moderated Middle Way.[1] In Christianity, Francis of Assisi and his followers practiced extreme acts of mortification.[2]

Asceticism[a] is a lifestyle characterized by abstinence from worldly pleasures, often for the purpose of pursuing spiritual goals.[3] Ascetics may withdraw from the world for their practices or continue to be part of their society, but typically adopt a frugallifestyle, characterised by the renunciation of material possessionsand physical pleasures, and also spend time fasting while concentrating on the practice of religion, prayer, or meditation.[4]Some individuals have also attempted an ascetic lifestyle to free themselves from addictions to things such as alcohol, tobacco, drugs, entertainment, sex, food, etc.[5]

Asceticism has been historically observed in many religious and philosophic traditions,[6] most notably among Ancient Greek philosophical schools (Epicureanism, Gymnosophism, Stoicism, and Pythagoreanism), Indian religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism),[6] Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam),[6]and contemporary practices continue amongst some of their followers.[5] Practitioners abandon sensual pleasures and lead an abstinent lifestyle, in the pursuit of redemption,[7] salvation, and/or spirituality.[8] Many ascetics believe the action of purifying the body helps to purify the soul,

and that in doing so, they will obtain a greater connection with the Divine or find inner peace. This may take the form of rituals, the renunciation of pleasure, and/or self-mortification.[6]

However, ascetics maintain that self-imposed constraints bring them greater freedom in various areas of their lives, such as increased clarity of thought and the ability to resist potentially destructive temptations. Asceticism is seen in some ancient theologies as a journey towards spiritual transformation, where the simple is sufficient, the bliss is within, the frugal is plenty.[4] Inversely, several ancient religious traditions, such as Zoroastrianism, Ancient Egyptian religion,[9] the Dionysian Mysteries, and *vāmācāra*, abstain from ascetic practices and focus on various types of good deeds in the world and the importance of family life.

Etymology and meaning

The adjective "ascetic" derives from the ancient Greek term *áskēsis*, which means "training" or "exercise".[10] The original usage did not refer to self-denial, but to the physical training required for athletic events.[3] Its usage later extended to rigorous practices used in many major religious traditions, in varying degrees, to attain redemption and higher spirituality.[11]

Dom Cuthbert Butler classified asceticism into natural and unnatural forms:[12]

- "Natural asceticism" involves a lifestyle which reduces material aspects of life to the utmost simplicity and to a minimum. This may include minimal, simple clothing, sleeping on a floor or in caves, and eating a simple, minimal amount of food.[12] Natural asceticism, state Wimbush and Valantasis, does not include maiming the body or harsher austerities that make the body suffer.[12]
- "Unnatural asceticism", in contrast, covers practices that go further, and involves body mortification, punishing one's own flesh, and habitual self-infliction of pain, such as by sleeping on a bed of nails.[12]

Religion

Self-discipline and abstinence in some form and degree are parts of religious practice within many religious and spiritual traditions. Ascetic lifestyle is associated particularly with monks, nuns, and fakirs in Abrahamic religions, and bhikkhus, munis, sannyasis, vairagis, goswamis, and yogis in Indian religions.[13][14]

Abrahamic religions

Bahá'í Faith

Further information: Bahá'í Faith and the unity of religion and Prayer in the Bahá'í Faith

In the Bahá'í Faith, according to Shoghi Effendi, the maintenance of a high standard of moral conduct is neither to be associated or confused with any form of extreme asceticism, nor of excessive and bigoted puritanism. The religious standard set by Bahá'u'lláh, founder of the Bahá'í Faith, seeks under no circumstances to deny anyone the legitimate right and privilege to derive the fullest advantage and benefit from the manifold joys, beauties, and pleasures with which the world has been so plentifully enriched by God, which Bahá'ís regard as an all-loving creator.[15]:44

Christianity

Part of a series on

Christian mysticism

Theology and philosophy

- Apophatic
- Ascetical
- Cataphatic
- Catholic spirituality
- Hellenistic
- Mystical theology
- Neoplatonic
- Henosis

Practices

Monasticism

- Monasticism
- New
- Silence
- Asceticism
- Mendicant
- Spiritual direction

Meditation

- Meditation

- *Lectio Divina*
- Invoking of Mystic Saints

Active asceticism

- Contemplation
- Hesychasm
- Jesus Prayer
- Quietism
- Stages of Christian perfection
- Hesychia
- Divinization
- Catharsis
- *Theosis*
- Kenosis
- Spiritual dryness
- Religious ecstasy

Passive asceticism

- Abstinence

Esoteric

- Charismatic
- Esoteric

People (by era or century)

Antiquity

- Ancient African
- Origen
- Thomasines
- Gregory of Nyssa
- Pseudo-Dionysius

Desert Fathers

- Paul of Thebes
- Anthony the Great
- Arsenius the Great
- Poemen
- Macarius of Egypt
- Moses the Black
- Syncletica
- Athanasius
- John Chrysostom
- Hilarion

- John Cassian

11th · 12th

- Bernard of Clairvaux
- Guigo II
- Hildegard of Bingen
- Symeon the New Theologian

13th · 14th

Dominican

- Dominic de Guzmán

Franciscan

- Francis of Assisi
- Anthony of Padua
- Bonaventure
- Jacopone da Todi
- Angela of Foligno

English

- Richard Rolle
- Walter Hilton
- Julian of Norwich
- Margery Kempe

Flemish

- Beatrice of Nazareth
- Lutgardis
- Hadewijch
- John van Ruysbroeck

German

- Meister Eckhart
- Johannes Tauler
- Henry Suso

Female

- Beatrice of Nazareth
- Bridget of Sweden
- Catherine of Siena
- Mechthild of Magdeburg
- Marguerite Porete

15th · 16th

Spanish

- Ignatius of Loyola
- Francisco de Osuna
- John of Ávila
- Teresa of Ávila
- John of the Cross

Others

- Catherine of Genoa

17th · 18th

French

- Margaret Mary Alacoque
- Pierre de Bérulle
- Jean-Jacques Olier
- Louis de Montfort
- Charles de Condren
- John Eudes
- John of St. Samson

Others

- Mary of Jesus of Ágreda
- Anne Catherine Emmerich
- Veronica Giuliani
- Francis de Sales

19th

- Dina Bélanger
- Catherine Labouré
- Mélanie Calvat
- Maximin Giraud
- Bernadette Soubirous
- Conchita de Armida
- Luisa Piccarreta
- Mary of the Divine Heart
- Thérèse of Lisieux
- Gemma Galgani

20th

- Padre Pio
- Therese Neumann
- Marthe Robin
- Alexandrina of Balazar
- Faustina Kowalska
- Sister Lúcia of Fátima

- Edgar Cayce
- Simone Weil
- Alfred Delp
- Thomas Merton
- Charles de Foucauld
- Edvige Carboni
- Elena Aiello

Contemporary papal views

Aspects of meditation

(*Orationis Formas*, 1989)

Reflection on the New Age (2003)

Literature and media

- *Lingua ignota*
- *Ordo Virtutum*
- *Scivias*
- *Ascent of Mount Carmel*
- *Dark Night of the Soul*
- *Spiritual Canticle*
- *Way of Perfection*
- *Book of the First Monks*
- *The Interior Castle*
- *Abbey of the Holy Ghost*
- *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*
- *From Willow Creek to Sacred Heart*
- *The Glories of Mary*
- *The Imitation of Christ*
- *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*
- *Philokalia*
- *Revelations of Divine Love*
- *The Story of a Soul*
- *Theologia Germanica*
- *Devotio Moderna*
- *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words*
- *Calls from the Message of Fatima*
- *The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima*
- *Sol de Fátima*
- *The Cloud of Unknowing*
- *On the Consolation of Philosophy*
- *The Mirror of Simple Souls*
- *Sister Catherine Treatise*

- *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii*
- *The Vision of Adamnán*
- *Divine Comedy*
- *Inferno*
- *Purgatorio*
- *Paradiso*
- *Fatima*

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Further information: Ascetical theology, Christian monasticism, Christian mysticism, and Christian meditation

Coptic icon of St. Anthony the Great, father of Christian monasticism and early anchorite. The Copticinscription reads 'Πιωϯ ⲁⲃⲃⲁ ⲁⲛⲧⲱⲛⲓ' ("The great Abba Anthony").

Notable Christian authors of Late Antiquity such as Origen, St Jerome, John Chrysostom, and Augustine of Hippo, interpreted meanings of the Biblical texts within a highly asceticized religious environment.[16] Scriptural examples of asceticism could be found in the lives of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, the twelve apostles, and Paul the Apostle.[16] The Dead Sea Scrolls revealed ascetic practices of the ancient Jewish sect of Essenes who took vows of abstinence to prepare for a holy war. An emphasis on an ascetic religious life was evident in both early Christian writings (*see*: Philokalia) and practices (*see*: Hesychasm). Other Christian

practitioners of asceticism include saints such as Paul the Hermit, Simeon Stylites, David of Wales, John of Damascus, Peter Waldo, Tamar of Georgia,[17] and Francis of Assisi.[16][18]

According to Richard Finn, much of early Christian asceticism has been traced to Judaism, but not to traditions within Greek asceticism.[4] Some of the ascetic thoughts in Christianity nevertheless, Finn states, have roots in Greek moral thought.[4]Virtuous living is not possible when an individual is craving bodily pleasures with desire and passion. Morality is not seen in the ancient theology as a balancing act between right and wrong, but a form of spiritual transformation, where the simple is sufficient, the bliss is within, the frugal is plenty.[4]

The deserts of the Middle East were at one time inhabited by thousands of male and female Christian ascetics, hermits and anchorites,[19] including St. Anthony the Great (otherwise known as St. Anthony of the Desert), St. Mary of Egypt, and St. Simeon Stylites, collectively known as the Desert Fathers and Desert Mothers. In 963 an association of monasteries called *Lavra* was formed on Mount Athos, in Eastern Orthodox tradition.[20] This became the most important center of orthodox Christian ascetic groups in the centuries that followed.[20] In the modern era, Mount Athos and Meteora have remained a significant center.[21]

Sexual abstinence such as those of the Encratites sect of Christians was only one aspect of ascetic renunciation, and both natural and unnatural asceticism have been part of Christian asceticism. The natural ascetic practices have included simple living, begging,[22]fasting and ethical practices such as humility, compassion, meditation, patience and prayer.[23] Evidence of extreme asceticism in Christianity appear in second century texts and thereafter, in both Eastern & Western Christian traditions, such as the practice of chaining the body to rocks, eating only grass,[24]praying seated on a pillar in the elements for decades such as by the monk Simeon Stylites,[25] solitary confinement inside a cell, abandoning personal hygiene and adopting lifestyle of a beast, self-inflicted pain and voluntary suffering,[22][26] however they were often rejected as beyond measure by other ascetics such as Barsanuphius of Gaza and John the Prophet.[27] Ascetic practices were linked to the Christian concepts of sin and redemption.[28][29]

The Waldensian symbol "*Lux lucet in tenebris*"

The Proto-Protestant Waldensian sect originated as an ascetic group within medieval Western Christianity, persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church.[18][30]

Evagrius Ponticus: monastic teaching

Main article: Evagrius Ponticus

Further information: Origen and Clement of Alexandria

Evagrius Ponticus, also called Evagrius the Solitary (345–399 CE), was a highly educated monastic teacher who produced a large theological body of work,[31] mainly ascetic, including the *Gnostikos*(Ancient Greek: γνωστικός, *gnōstikos*, "learned", from γνῶσις, *gnōsis*, "knowledge"), also known as *The Gnostic: To the One Made Worthy of Gnosis*. The *Gnostikos* is the second volume of a trilogy containing the *Praktikos*, intended for young monks to achieve *apatheia*, i.e., "a state of calm which is the prerequisite for love and knowledge",[31]in order to purify their intellect and make it impassible, to reveal the truth hidden in every being. The third book, *Kephalaia Gnostika*, was meant for meditation by advanced monks. Those writings made him one of the most recognized ascetic teachers and scriptural interpreters of his time,[31] which include Clement of Alexandriaand Origen.

The ascetic literature of early Christianity was influenced by pre-Christian Greek philosophical traditions, especially Plato and Aristotle, looking for the perfect spiritual way of life.[32] According to Clement of Alexandria, philosophy and Scriptures can be seen as "double expressions of one pattern of knowledge".[31] According to Evagrius, "body and the soul are there to help the intellect and not to hinder it".[33]

Islam

Main article: Sufism

Further information: Dervish, Fakir, and Zhikr

A Sufi Muslim ascetic (*fakir*) in Bengal during the 1860s

The Arabic term for "asceticism" is *zuhd*.[34] The Islamic prophetMuhammad and his followers practiced asceticism.[35] However, contemporary mainstream Islam has not had a tradition of asceticism, but its Sufi groups[36] have cherished their own ascetic tradition for several centuries.[37][38][39] Islamic literary sources and historians report that during the early Muslim conquests of the Middle East and North Africa (7th–10th centuries), some of the Muslim warriors guarding the frontier settlements were also

ascetics;[40][41] numerous historical accounts also report of some Christian monks that apostatized from Christianity, converted to Islam, and joined the *jihad*,[41] as well as of several Muslim warriors that repudiated Islam, converted to Christianity, and became Christian monks.[41][42] Monasticism is forbidden in Islam.[40][41][43] Scholars in the field of Islamic studies have argued that asceticism (*zuhd*) served as a precursor to the later doctrinal formations of Sufis that began to emerge in the tenth century[37]through the works of individuals such as al-Junayd, al-Qushayrī, al-Sarrāj, al-Hujwīrī and others.[44][45]

Sufism emerged and grew as a mystical,[37] somewhat hidden tradition in the mainstream Sunni and Shia denominations of Islam,[37] state Eric Hanson and Karen Armstrong, likely in reaction to "the growing worldliness of Umayyad and Abbasidsocieties".[46] Acceptance of asceticism emerged in Sufism slowly because it was contrary to the *sunnah*, states Nile Green, and early Sufis condemned "ascetic practices as unnecessary public displays of what amounted to false piety".[47] The ascetic Sufis were hunted and persecuted both by Sunni and Shia rulers, in various centuries.[48][49] Sufis were highly influential and greatly successful in spreading Islam between the 10th and 19th centuries,[37]particularly to the furthest outposts of the Muslim world in the Middle East and North Africa, the Balkans and Caucasus, the Indian subcontinent, and finally Central, Eastern, and Southeast Asia.[37] Some scholars have argued that Sufi Muslim ascetics and mystics played a decisive role in converting the Turkic peoples to Islam between the 10th and 12th centuries and Mongol invaders in Persia during the 13th and 14th centuries, mainly because of the similarities between the extreme, ascetic Sufis (fakirs and dervishes) and the Shamans of the traditional Turco-Mongol religion.[50][51]

Sufism was adopted and then grew particularly in the frontier areas of Islamic states,[37][50] where the asceticism of its fakirs and dervishes appealed to populations already used to the monastic traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and medieval Christianity.[46][52][53] Ascetic practices of Sufi fakirs have included celibacy, fasting, and self-mortification.[54][55] Sufi ascetics also participated in mobilizing Muslim warriors for holy wars, helping travelers, dispensing blessings through their perceived magical powers, and in helping settle disputes.[56] Ritual ascetic practices, such as self-flagellation (*Tatbir*), have been practiced by Shia Muslims annually at the Mourning of Muharram.[57]

Judaism

Main article: Asceticism in Judaism

Further information: Jewish mysticism

Chassidei Ashkenaz were a Jewish mystical and ascetic movement in medieval Germany.

Asceticism has not been a dominant theme within Judaism, but minor to significant ascetic traditions have been a part of Jewishspirituality.[58] The history of Jewish asceticism is traceable to first millennium BCE era with the references of the Nazirite (or Nazorean, Nazarene, Naziruta, Nazir), whose rules of practice are found in Book of Numbers 6:1–21.[59] The ascetic practices included not cutting the hair, abstaining from eating meat or grapes, abstention from wine, or fasting and hermit style living conditions for a period of time.[59] Literary evidence suggests that this tradition continued for a long time, well into the common era, and both Jewish men and women could follow the ascetic path, with examples such as the ascetic practices for fourteen years by Queen Helena of Adiabene, and by Miriam of Tadmor.[59][60] After the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile and the Mosaic institution was done away with, a different form of asceticism arose when Antiochus IV Epiphanes threatened the Jewish religion in 167 BCE. The Essene tradition of the second Temple period is described as one of the movements within historic Jewish asceticism between second century BCE and first century CE.[61]

Ascetic Jewish sects existed in ancient and medieval era times,[62]most notably the Essenes. According to Allan Nadler, two most significant examples of medieval Jewish asceticism have been Havoth ha-Levavoth and Hasidei Ashkenaz.[58] Pious self-deprivation was a part of the dualism and mysticism in these ascetic groups. This voluntary separation from the world was called *Perishuth*, and the Jewish society widely accepted this tradition in late medieval era.[58] Extreme forms of ascetic practices have been opposed or controversial in the Hasidic movement.[63]

The Ashkenazi Hasidim (Hebrew: חסידי אשכנז, romanized: *Chassidei Ashkenaz*) were a Jewish mystical, ascetic movement in the German Rhineland whose practices are documented in the texts of the 12th and 13th centuries.[64] Peter Meister states that this Jewish asceticism emerged in the tenth century, grew much wider with prevalence in southern Europe and the Middle East through the Jewish pietistic movement.[65] According to Shimon Shokek, these ascetic practices were the result of an influence of medieval Christianity on Ashkenazi Hasidism. The Jewish faithful of this Hasidic tradition practiced the punishment of body, self-torture by starvation, sitting in the open in freezing snow, or in the sun with fleas in summer, all with the goal of purifying the soul and turning one's attention away from the body unto the soul.[64]

Another significant school of Jewish asceticism appeared in the 16th century led from Safed.[66] These mystics engaged in radical material abstentions and self-mortification with the belief that this helps them transcend the created material world, reach and exist in the mystical spiritual world. A studied example of this group was Hayyim ben Joseph Vital, and their rules of ascetic lifestyle (*Hanhagoth*) are documented.[58][67]

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Indian religions

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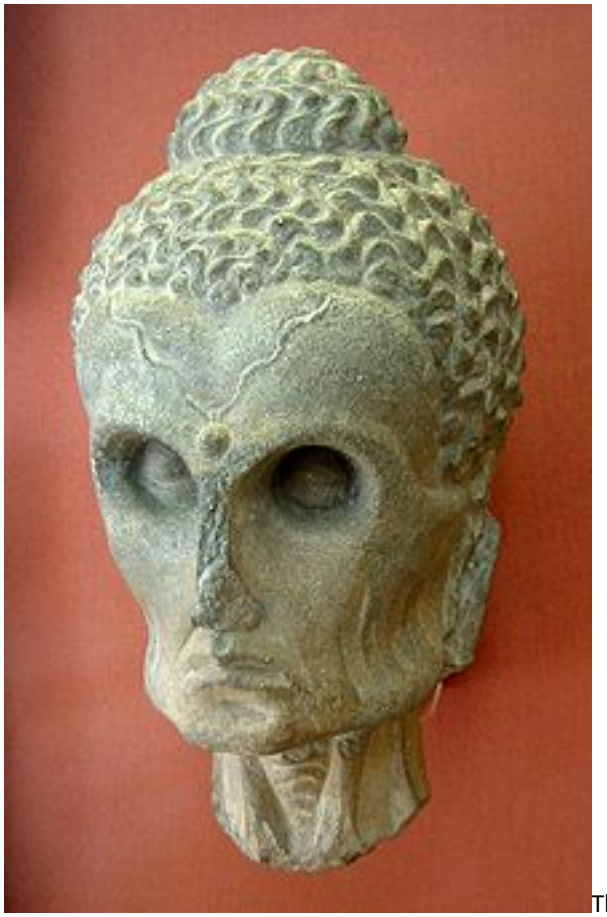


The Buddha as an ascetic. Gandhara, 2nd–3rd century CE. British Museum 440

A female ascetic of the Vaishnavism tradition, 19th-century India 441

Asceticism is found in both non-theistic and theistic traditions within Indian religions. The origins of the practice are ancient, and a heritage shared by the major Indian religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism. They are referred by many names such as Sadhu, Pravrajita, Bhikshu, Yati etc.[68]

Asceticism in Indian religions includes a spectrum of diverse practices, ranging from the mild self-discipline, self-imposed poverty and simple living typical of Buddhism and Hinduism,[69][70] to more severe austerities and self-mortification practices of monks in Jainism and now extinct Ajivikas in the pursuit of salvation.[71]Some ascetics live as hermits relying on whatever food they can find in the forests, then sleep and meditate in caves; others travel from one holy site to another while sustaining their body by begging for food; yet others live in monasteries as monks or nuns.[72] Some ascetics live like priests and preachers, other ascetics are armed and militant,[72] to resist any persecution—a phenomenon that emerged after the arrival of Islam in India.[73][74] Self-torture is relatively uncommon practice but one that attracts public attention. In Indian traditions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, self-mortification is typically criticized.[72] However, Indian mythologies also describe numerous ascetic gods or demons who pursued harsh austerities for decades or centuries that helped each gain special powers.[75]

Buddhism

The historical Siddhartha Gautama adopted an extreme ascetic life in search of enlightenment.[76] However, after enlightenment he rejected extreme asceticism in favor of a more moderated version, the "Middle Way."[77]

According to Hajime Nakamura and other scholars, some early Buddhist texts suggest that asceticism was a part of Buddhist practice in its early days.[77][78] Further, in practice, records from about the start of the common era through the 19th century suggest that asceticism has been a part of Buddhism, both in Theravada and Mahayana traditions.

Theravada

See also: Dhutanga

Textual evidence suggests that ascetic practices were a part of the Buddhist tradition in Sri Lanka by the third century BC, and this tradition continued through the medieval era in parallel to *sangha*style monastic tradition.[79]

In the Theravada tradition of Thailand, medieval texts report of ascetic monks who wander and dwell in the forest or crematory alone, do austere practices, and these came to be known as *Thudong*.[80][81] Ascetic Buddhist monks have been and continue to be found in Myanmar, and as in Thailand, they are known to pursue their own version of Buddhism, resisting the hierarchical institutionalized *sangha* structure of monasteries in Buddhism.[82]

Mahayana

In the Mahayana tradition asceticism with esoteric and mystical meanings became an accepted practice, such as in the Tendai and Shingon schools of Japanese Buddhism.[79] These Japanese practices included penance, austerities, ablutions under a waterfall, and rituals to purify oneself.[79] Japanese records from the 12th century record stories of monks undertaking severe asceticism, while records suggest that 19th century Nichiren Buddhist monks woke up at midnight or 2:00 am daily, and performed ascetic water purification rituals under cold waterfalls.[79] Other practices include the extreme ascetic practices of eating only pine needles, resins, seeds and ultimately self-mummification, while alive, or *Sokushinbutsu*(*miira*) in Japan.[83][84][85]

In Chinese Buddhism self-mummification ascetic practices were less common but recorded in the *Ch'an* (Zen Buddhism) tradition there.[86] More ancient Chinese Buddhist asceticism, somewhat similar to *Sokushinbutsu* are also known, such as the public self-immolation (self-cremation, as shaoshen 燒身 or zifen 自焚)[87]practice, aimed at abandoning the impermanent body.[note 1] The

earliest-documented ascetic Buddhist monk biography is of Fayu (法羽) in 396 CE, followed by more than fifty documented cases in the centuries that followed including that of monk Daodu (道度).[90][91] This was considered as evidence of a renunciant bodhisattva, and may have been inspired by the Jataka tales wherein the Buddha in his earlier lives immolates himself to assist other living beings,[92] or by the Bhaiṣajyaguruvaiḍūryaprabhārāja-related teachings in the *Lotus Sutra*.[93] Historical records suggest that the self-immolation practices were observed by nuns in Chinese Buddhism as well.[94]

The Chinese Buddhist asceticism practices, states James Benn, were not an adaptation or import of Indian ascetic practices, but an invention of Chinese Buddhists, based on their unique interpretations of *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* or *Lotus Sūtra*.[95] It may be an adoption of more ancient pre-Buddhist Chinese practices,[96][97] or from Taoism.[94] It is unclear if self-immolation was limited primarily to Chinese asceticism tradition, and strong evidence of it being a part of a large scale, comprehensive ascetic program among Chinese Buddhists is lacking.[89]

Hinduism

See also: Tapas (Sanskrit), Sannyasa, and Ataptatanu

Renunciation from the worldly life, and a pursuit of spiritual life either as a part of monastic community or a hermit, has been a historic tradition of Hinduism since ancient times. The renunciation tradition is called Sannyasa, and this is not the same as asceticism—which typically connotes severe self-denial and self-mortification. *Sannyasa* often involved a simple life, one with minimal or no material possessions, study, meditation and ethical living. Those who undertook this lifestyle were called *Sannyasi*, *Sadhu*, *Yati*,[98] *Bhiksu*, *Pravrajita/Pravrajitā*[99] and Parivrajaka in Hindu texts.[100] The term with a meaning closer to asceticism in Hindu texts is Tapas, but it too spans a spectrum of meanings ranging from inner heat, to self-mortification and penance with austerities, to meditation and self-discipline.[70][101][102]

The 11th century literary work *Yatidharmasamuccaya* is a Vaishnava text that summarizes ascetic practices in Vaishnavism tradition of Hinduism.[103] In Hindu traditions, as with other Indian religions, both men and women have historically participated in a diverse spectrum of ascetic practices.[8]

Vedas and Upanishads

Asceticism-like practices are hinted in the Vedas, but these hymns have been variously interpreted as referring to early Yogis and loner renouncers. One such mention is in the Kesin hymn of the Rigveda, where Keśins ("long-haired" ascetics) and Munis ("silent ones") are described.[104][105] These Kesins of the Vedic era, are described as follows by Karel Werner:[106]

> The Keśin does not live a normal life of convention. His hair and beard grow longer, he spends long periods of time in absorption, musing and meditating and therefore he is called "sage" (muni). They wear clothes made of yellow rags fluttering in the wind, or perhaps more likely, they go naked, clad only in the yellow dust of the Indian soil. But their personalities are not bound to earth, for they follow the path of the mysterious wind when the gods enter them. He is someone lost in thoughts: he is miles away.
>
> — Karel Werner (1977), "Yoga and the Ṛg Veda: An Interpretation of the Keśin Hymn"[106]

The Vedic and Upanishadic texts of Hinduism, states Mariasusai Dhavamony, do not discuss self-inflicted pain, but do discuss self-restraint and self-control.[107] The monastic tradition of Hinduism is evidenced in first millennium BCE, particularly in its Advaita Vedanta tradition. This is evidenced by the oldest Sannyasa Upanishads, because all of them have a strong Advaita Vedanta outlook.[108] Most of the Sannyasa Upanishads present a Yoga and nondualism (Advaita) Vedanta philosophy.[109][110] The 12th-century *Shatyayaniya Upanishad* is a significant exception, which presents qualified dualistic

and Vaishnavism (VishishtadvaitaVedanta) philosophy.[110][111] These texts mention a simple, ethical lifestyle but do not mention self-torture or body mortification. For example:

These are the vows a Sannyasi must keep:

Abstention from injuring living beings, truthfulness, abstention from appropriating the property of others, abstention from sex, liberality (kindness, gentleness) are the major vows. There are five minor vows: abstention from anger, obedience towards the guru, avoidance of rashness, cleanliness, and purity in eating. He should beg (for food) without annoying others, any food he gets he must compassionately share a portion with other living beings, sprinkling the remainder with water he should eat it as if it were a medicine.

— Baudhayana Dharmasūtra, II.10.18.1–10[112]

Similarly, the Nirvana Upanishad asserts that the Hindu ascetic should hold, according to Patrick Olivelle, that "the sky is his belief, his knowledge is of the absolute, union is his initiation, compassion alone is his pastime, bliss is his garland, the cave of solitude is his fellowship", and so on, as he proceeds in his effort to gain self-knowledge (or soul-knowledge) and its identity with the Hindu metaphysical concept of Brahman.[113] Other behavioral characteristics of the *Sannyasi* include: ahimsa (non-violence), akrodha (not become angry even if you are abused by others),[114]disarmament (no weapons), chastity, bachelorhood (no marriage), avyati (non-desirous), amati (poverty), self-restraint, truthfulness, sarvabhutahita (kindness to all creatures), asteya (non-stealing), aparigraha (non-acceptance of gifts, non-possessiveness) and shaucha (purity of body speech and mind).[115][116]

Bhagavad Gita

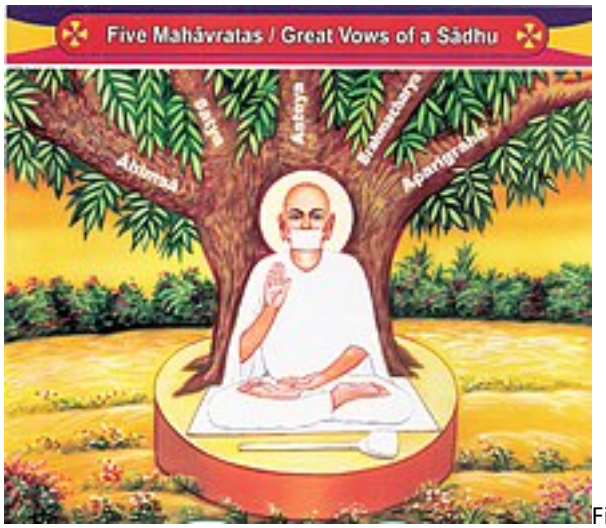
In the Bhagavad Gita, verse 17.5 criticize a form of asceticism that diverges from scriptural guidance and is driven by pride, ego, or attachment, rather than for genuine spiritual growth. Verse 17.6 extends the criticism of such ascetic practices, noting that they are considered harmful to both the practitioner's body and the divine within. With these two verses, Krishna emphasizes that true ascetic practices should align with scriptural teachings and aim towards higher spiritual goals.[117]

Some people who undertake acts of austerity perform ferocious deeds not sanctioned by scripture. They are motivated by hypocrisy and egotism, and are beset by the power of desire and passion.

— Bhagavad Gita, Verse 17.5

Jainism

Main article: Jain monasticism



Five Mahavratas of Jain ascetics

Asceticism in one of its most intense forms can be found in Jainism. Ascetic life may include nakedness symbolizing non-possession of even clothes, fasting, body mortification, penance and other austerities, in order to burn away past karma and stop producing new karma, both of which are believed in Jainism to be essential for reaching *siddha* and *moksha* (liberation from rebirths, salvation).[118][119][120] In Jainism, the ultimate goal of life is to achieve the liberation of soul from endless cycle of rebirths (moksha from samsara), which requires ethical living and asceticism. Most of the austerities and ascetic practices can be traced back to Mahavira, the twenty-fourth Tirthankara who practiced 12 years of asceticism before reaching enlightenment.[121][122]

Jain texts such as *Tattvartha Sutra* and *Uttaradhyayana Sutra* discuss ascetic austerities to great lengths and formulations. Six outer and six inner practices are most common, and oft repeated in later Jain texts.[123] According to John Cort, outer austerities include complete fasting, eating limited amounts, eating restricted items, abstaining from tasty foods, mortifying the flesh and guarding the flesh (avoiding anything that is a source of temptation).[124] Inner austerities include expiation, confession, respecting and assisting mendicants, studying, meditation and ignoring bodily wants in order to abandon the body.[124]

The Jain text of *Kalpa Sūtra* describes Mahavira's asceticism in detail, whose life is a source of guidance on most of the ascetic practices in Jainism:[125]

The Venerable Ascetic Mahavira for a year and a month wore clothes; after that time he walked about naked, and accepted the alms in the hollow of his hand. For more than twelve years the Venerable Ascetic Mahivira neglected his body and abandoned the care of it; he with equanimity bore, underwent, and suffered all pleasant or unpleasant occurrences arising from divine powers, men, or animals.

— Kalpa Sutra 117

Both Mahavira and his ancient Jaina followers are described in Jainism texts as practicing body mortification and being abused by animals as well as people, but never retaliating and never initiating harm or injury (ahimsa) to any other being.[126] With such ascetic practices, he burnt off his past Karma, gained spiritual knowledge, and became a Jina.[126] These austere practices are part of the monastic path in Jainism.[127] The practice of body mortification is called *kaya klesha* in Jainism and is found in verse 9.19 of the *Tattvartha Sutra* by Umaswati, the most authoritative oldest surviving Jaina philosophical text.[128][129]

Monastic practice

In Jain monastic practice, the monks and nuns take ascetic vows, after renouncing all relations and possessions. The vows include a complete commitment to nonviolence (*Ahimsa*). They travel from city to city, often crossing forests and deserts, and always barefoot. Jain ascetics do not stay in a single place for more than two months to prevent attachment to any place.[130][131] However, during the four months of monsoon (rainy season) known as *chaturmaas*, they stay at a single place to avoid killing life forms that thrive during the rains.[132] Jain monks and nuns practice complete celibacy. They do not touch or share a sitting platform with a person of the opposite sex.

Jain ascetics follow a strict vegetarian diet without root vegetables. Prof. Pushpendra K. Jain explains:

Clearly enough, to procure such vegetables and fruits, one must pull out the plant from the root, thus destroying the entire plant, and with it all the other micro organisms around the root. Fresh fruits and vegetables should be plucked only when ripe and ready to fall off, or ideally after they have fallen off the plant. In case they are plucked from the plants, only as much as required should be procured and consumed without waste.[133]

The monks of Śvetāmbara sub-tradition within Jainism do not cook food but solicit alms from householders. Digambara monks have only a single meal a day.[134] Neither group will beg for food, but a Jain ascetic may accept a meal from a householder, provided that the latter is pure of mind and body and offers the food of his own volition and in the prescribed manner. During such an encounter, the monk remains standing and eats only a measured amount. A routine feature of Jain asceticism are fasting periods, where adherents abstain from consuming food, and sometimes water, only during daylight hours, for up to 30 days. Some monks avoid (or limit) medicine and/or hospitalization out of disregard for the physical body.[133]

Śvētāmbara monks and nuns wear only unstitched white robes (an upper and lower garment), and own one bowl they use for eating and collecting alms. Male Digambara sect monks do not wear any clothes, carry nothing with them except a soft broom made of shed peacock feathers (*pinchi*) to gently remove any insect or living creature in their way or bowl, and they eat with their hands.[134]They sleep on the floor without blankets, and sit on wooden platforms. Other austerities include meditation in seated or standing posture near riverbanks in the cold wind, or meditation atop hills and mountains, especially at noon when the sun is at its fiercest.[135] Such austerities are undertaken according to the physical and mental limits of the individual ascetic.

When death is imminent from an advanced age or terminal disease, many Jain ascetics take a final vow of Santhara or Sallekhana, a fast to peaceful and detached death, by first reducing intake of and then ultimately abandoning all medicines, food, and water.[136] Scholars state that this ascetic practice is not a suicide, but a form of natural death, done without passion or turmoil or suddenness, and because it is done without active violence to the body.[136]

Sikhism

While Sikhism treats lust as a vice, it has at the same time unmistakingly pointed out that man must share the moral responsibility by leading the life of a householder. What is important is to be God-centred. According to Sikhism, ascetics are certainly not on the right path.[137] When Guru Nanak visited Gorakhmata, he discussed the true meaning of asceticism with some yogis:[138]

Asceticism doesn't lie in ascetic robes, or in walking staff, nor in the ashes. Asceticism doesn't lie in the earring, nor in the shaven head, nor blowing a conch. Asceticism lies in remaining pure amidst impurities. Asceticism doesn't lie in mere words; He is an ascetic who treats everyone alike. Asceticism doesn't lie in visiting burial places, It lies not in wandering about, nor in bathing at places of pilgrimage. Asceticism is to remain pure amidst impurities.

— Guru Nanak[138]

Other religions

Inca religion

In Inca religion of medieval South America, asceticism was practiced.[139] The high priests of the Inca people lived an ascetic life, which included fasting, chastity and eating simple food.[140]The Jesuit records report Christian missionaries encountering ascetic Inca hermits in the Andean mountains.[141]

Taoism

Historical evidence suggests that the monastic tradition in Taoismpracticed asceticism, and the most common ascetic practices included fasting, complete sexual abstinence, self-imposed poverty, sleep deprivation, and secluding oneself in the wilderness.[142][143]More extreme and unnatural ascetic Taoist practices have included public self-drowning and self-cremation.[144] The goal of this spectrum of practices, like in other religions, was to reach the divine and get past the mortal body.[145] According to Stephen Eskildsen, asceticism continues to be a part of modern Taoism.[146][147]

Zoroastrianism

In Zoroastrianism, active participation in life through good thoughts, good words and good deeds is necessary to ensure happiness and to keep the chaos at bay. This *active* participation is a central element in Zoroaster's concept of free will. In the *Avesta*, the sacred scriptures of Zoroastrianism, fasting and mortification are forbidden.[148]

Academic views

Sociological and psychological views

Further information: Inner-worldly asceticism

Early 20th-century German sociologist Max Weber made a distinction between *innerweltliche* and *ausserweltliche* asceticism, which means (roughly) "inside the world" and "outside the world", respectively. Talcott Parsons translated these as "worldly" and "otherworldly"—however, some translators use "inner-worldly", and this is more in line with inner world explorations of mysticism, a common purpose of asceticism. "Inner- or Other-worldly" asceticism is practised by people who withdraw from the world to live an ascetic life (this includes monks who live communally in monasteries, as well as hermits who live alone). "Worldly" asceticism refers to people who live ascetic lives but do not withdraw from the world:

Wealth is thus bad ethically only in so far as it is a temptation to idleness and sinful enjoyment of life, and its acquisition is bad only when it is with the purpose of later living merrily and without care.

— Max Weber[149], The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

Weber claimed this distinction originated in the Protestant Reformation, but later became secularized, so the concept can be applied to both religious and secular ascetics.[150]

The 20th century American psychological theorist David McClelland suggested worldly asceticism is specifically targeting worldly pleasures that "distract" people from their calling and may accept worldly pleasures that are not distracting. As an example, he pointed out Quakers have historically objected to bright-coloured clothing, but wealthy Quakers often made their drab clothing out of expensive materials. The color was considered distracting, but the materials were not. Amish groups use similar criteria to make decisions about which modern technologies to use and which to avoid.[151]

Nietzsche's and Epicurus's view

In the third essay ("What Do Ascetic Ideals Mean?")[152] from his 1887 book *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Friedrich Nietzsche[153] discusses what he terms the "ascetic ideal" and its role in the formulation of morality along with the history of the will. In the essay, Nietzsche describes how such a paradoxical action as asceticism might serve the interests of life: through asceticism one can overcome one's desire to perish from pain and despair and attain mastery over oneself. In this way one can express both ressentiment and the will to power. Nietzsche describes the morality of the ascetic priest as characterized by Christianity as one where, finding oneself in pain or despair and desiring to perish from it, the will to live causes one to place oneself in a state of hibernation and denial of the material world in order to minimize that pain and thus preserve life, a technique which Nietzsche locates at the very origin of secular science as well as of religion. He associated the "ascetic ideal" with Christian decadence.[154][155][156]

Asceticism is not always life-denying or pleasure-denying. Some ascetic practices have actually been carried out as disciplines of pleasure. Epicurus taught a philosophy of pleasure, but he also engaged in ascetic practices like fasting. This may have been done in the service of testing the limits of nature, of desires, of pleasure, and of his own body. In the eighth of his Principal Doctrines, Epicurus says that we sometimes choose pains if greater pleasures ensue from them, or avoid pleasures if greater pains ensue, and in the "autarchy" portion of his Letter to Menoeceus, he teaches that living frugally can help us to better enjoy luxuries when we have them.

See also

- Ascetics (category)
- Aesthetism
- Arthur Schopenhauer
- Stoicism

Notes

1. ^ /əˈsɛtɪsɪzəm/; from Ancient Greek ἄσκησις *(áskēsis)* 'exercise, training'

1. ^ Alternate practices included cutting off a part of one's body.[88][89]

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- Asketikos – articles, research, and discourse on asceticism.

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	Sustainable living
	Sustainable sanitation
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	Temperance
	Testimony of simplicity
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	Twelve Tribes communities
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	Transition town

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v t e **Consecrated life in the Catholic Church**	
Types	Consecrated virgin Hermit Religious institute Orders Monastic Cenobitic Chapter Enclosed Idiorrhythmic

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	Secular institute
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	Vestment
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	General

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v t e	**Sufism terminology**
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	Imam
	Khatib
	Majzoob
	Marabout
	Mudaqiq
	Muqaddam
	Muqarrab
	Murshid
	Mutahaqiq
	Murid
	Nass al-Houdhour
	Pir
	Qalandar
	Qāriʾ
	Qutb
	Rabbani
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	Siddiq
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	Ishq
	Ismul Azam

	Lataif-e-Sitta
	Maqam
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	Rūh
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